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ABSTRACT

There are 2 papers combined under this title, the first being specific to the Alaskan and the second to the Lapps of Northern Norway. Language difficulties were cited as being prevalent in both situations. English was reported to be the second language for the Alaskan, while Norwegian (which is completely different from the Lappish language) was the tongue spoken in those schools. Cultural differences were mentioned as a major factor in education. Geographic isolation was significant in Alaska, while the Lapps were slow to understand the value of education. Coombs, concerned with the educational deficits cited in the Coleman Report of 1966, suggested vicarious experiences for the students through multimedia instruction, improved teaching of English, more native teachers and more cross-culturally adept non-native teachers, improved training and selection of teachers, program development, adult education, community involvement, and more interaction with the rest of the world. Boon noted the need for better language instruction, an upgrading of the Lapp economy, and a narrowing of the gap between the goals of education and the goals of the Lapp family unit. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (BD)

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Background Paper - 4.B.

CONFERENCE ON CROSS-CULTURAL
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THE PEDAGOGICAL SITUATION IN THE NORTH - GENERAL

(Commentary)

The Pedagogical Situation in the North - with Special Reference to Alaska

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If, in a consideration of the topic, "The Pedagogical Situation in the North," we accept the word pedagogical in its narrower meaning of educational methods, techniques, or even principles, I am not sure that it has any special relevance for this conference. If, on the other hand, the term can be given a broader meaning to include all those factors which affect the learning of the school child, it can be very pertinent indeed. This is not to say that the lifelong research and observations of Jean Piaget, the methods of Maria Montessori, or the theoretical formulations of Jerome Bruner and his colleagues at Woods Hole have no relevance for the education of the indigenous children of the North. The point is that they may have little special relevance for those children as distinguished from children everywhere.

In 1965, in compliance with the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Federal government launched a study of the equality of educational opportunity in the United States, particularly with reference to ethnic minorities within the country which were socially and economically disadvantaged. The following year the results of the study were published under the authorship of James S. Coleman of Johns Hopkins University and a group of collaborators and has become known popularly as the "Coleman Report."[1] The Coleman Report found serious educational deficits on the part of the disadvantaged ethnic groups by comparison with the general population of students and particularly with the white students.

Oriental-Americans were close to the national mean but Indian-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Negroes were well below it. (It is perhaps not particularly important, but nevertheless true, that Indian students were the highest of the four disadvantaged ethnic minorities.)

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The Coleman study also found that the schools are less important in determining the learning achievement of a child than are the socioeconomic factors in his total environment. This has not been a popular finding; both educators and non-educators have resisted it. However, the study further found that the disadvantaged child is far more dependent upon the school for his learning than is his more fortunate peer. When the home and community institutions, other than the school, are not able to make a strong contribution to learning, the school must assume a larger responsibility than would ordinarily be the case.

Finally, Coleman concluded that even though the school offered identical learning opportunity to children of different ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic levels, it had not provided equal opportunity if disadvantaged children left school with a learning deficit.

This was a new and startling concept in American education. It fixed a greater responsibility upon the schools than they had theretofore been called upon to assume. It amounted to a mandate to schools and the communities which supported them to make whatever input was necessary, in terms of money, professional skill, or innovative, differentiated educational programs to permit disadvantaged pupils to attain equality.

Alaska native students, Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut, on the average, show an educational deficit throughout their school careers. A study now in progress [2] has found that in three Alaskan high schools, as measured by standardized achievement tests, native students are from 1 to 3 years behind the average of American students by their last year in high school. Also, in an admirably forthright study of its high school, [3] one of Alaska's larger cities found that:

> "A definite dropout problem existed among the native students. The percentage of natives dropping out of school before graduation was two and one-half times as great as the non-native.
>
> ... "The percentage of natives who had failing grades was twice as large as non-natives. And finally,
>
> ... "Native students who came from small towns and villages had more difficulty with high school subjects than the native students who had lived in the larger towns and were more closely associated with the dominant culture for the major portion of their lives."

This educational deficit should not surprise anyone and it certainly reflects no discredit on the native people. The causes of it, I believe, can be put under three main headings:

1. Geographic Isolation

The native village on the Alaskan tundra is as far removed from the main current of the majority culture as one can get in the United States unless it is in the farthest reaches of the Navajo Reservation. Of a sample of 101 students in the Federal government's Mount Edgecumbe High School two years ago, only 9 per cent had a telephone in their home, only 1 per cent had a television set, and only 24 per cent had access to a daily newspaper. Most of the native children of Alaska have not had hundreds of experiences which the average American child takes for granted. I will not forget the Eskimo girl who, while passing through Juneau on her way from her native village to the Mount Edgecumbe school, saw a cow for the first time. Her surprised comment was, "It's almost as large as a moose." Most children upon seeing a moose for the first time might say, "It's even larger than a cow."

2. The Necessity for Learning English as a Second Language

Of the Mount Edgecumbe sample, only 37 per cent came from homes in which English is the normal language of communication. The percentage is much lower in some parts of the State such as the region of the lower Kuskokwim River. Competence in the English language is a key to erasing the other educational deficits.

3. Cultural Differences

The native child has been reared with a set of cultural values and attitudes quite different from those of the competitive, acquisitive, time-conscious American middle class majority to which the nation's educational apparatus is mainly geared. Fewer than 5 per cent of the parents of the Mount Edgecumbe sample had graduated from high school.

The goals of education are, of course, of crucial significance. None of the foregoing matters much if the goal of a native youth is to remain in his ancestral village and eke out a precarious existence in a dwindling subsistence economy of fishing, hunting, and trapping. There is mounting evidence that this is not what most native youth desire and that the demands of an encroaching cash economy will not permit it. I will, of course, defer to the economists on the point, but it does not seem to me that the small native villages of Alaska have much of a future. Native youth, I believe, will increasingly wish to prepare themselves to live and make a living in the larger communities of Alaska or the "lower 48" or in the emerging Alaskan communities which new economic development may bring about.

What can the schools do to meet the awesome responsibility which Coleman's dictum, if accepted, places upon them? No more can be

accomplished here than to suggest in the briefest outline what must be done.

Obviously, all feasible means must be employed to bring to Alaskan rural youth a wealth of vicarious experiences when they cannot share in them directly. These will range all the way from audio-visual media, programed learning, and field trips to both educational and commercial television. The latter is absolutely essential and plans to put up the necessary satellites should be pushed. Learning materials which bridge the familiar and the new must be developed. A promising beginning on a set of Alaskan readers is under way.

The principles of linguistic science must be incorporated in the teaching of English as a second language. Appropriate materials and methods must be developed and teachers trained in their use. While initial instruction in reading and writing in the native tongue may theoretically be preferable, shortages of suitable materials and competent personnel may make this very difficult.

Native students must have skilled and sympathetic assistance in understanding their heritage and its relationship to the modern world. The school must mediate the child's potentially conflicting experiences in two cultures. There is a need for many more well trained native teachers, preferably bilingual, and for non-native teachers with the skills and insights necessary in cross-cultural education.

There must be vastly improved teacher selection and training, program development, adult education, and community involvement. All of this will take a great deal of money - more money by far than has ever been available. We shall see how our society rises to this challenge.

Finally, I would hope that the native youth of Alaska might be permitted, indeed encouraged, to become acquainted with the rest of the nation and the world in the most literal sense. There is a type of inequity between the native and non-native peoples of Alaska which is little discussed. Even though it may be the last American frontier, a high proportion of the non-native people in Alaska are well educated and sophisticated. Coming to Alaska for the challenge of adventure, or for whatever reason, they bring their skills, their competencies, and their culture with them. Some of them stay for awhile while others stay for a lifetime. But there has seemed to be a reluctance on the part of the decision makers in the State to permit native youth to secure their secondary and higher education outside the State. Whether this is a matter of State pride or fear that some of the youth may never return to that sparsely settled land, it serves to slow up the reduction of the educational deficit. The native people of Alaska are unusually amiable, resourceful, and adaptable. They need to be helped by all available means to overcome their educational disadvantage. And in the case of most of them their love of the Great Land will be so strong that they will return to it.

SOURCES

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Background Paper - 4.C.

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THE PEDAGOGICAL SITUATION IN THE NORTH (GENERAL)

(Commentary)

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The Pedagogical Situation in the North As Affecting The Lapps in the Northern Parts of Norway

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The pedagogical situation in the Lapp-speaking districts of Norway gives the Lapps two main problems:

1. WHAT do they want the school to teach

2. HOW will the school achieve the most desirable results

In earlier times people did not bother so much about what the children learned at school. They mostly were content when the children were taught religion, and eventually - got some practice in reading, writing and arithmetic. What really mattered for the children's later practical life, was taught them by their parents during the daily work like farming, fishing, hunting, reindeer-breeding.

But, although the parents did not claim too much from the schools, it still was very difficult to carry out the simple educational goals for the school satisfactory. The school's language of instruction was Norwegian, a language which neither parents nor pupils understood.

The language problem is old, and since a long time this problem has called forth struggle. A historic review shows that between 1710 and 1870 there were shorter periods with cultural humaneness and good will on the side of the authorities. However, from 1870 until the last world war the authorities tried to "Norwegianize" the Lapps in a very hard way, and the Lappish language was absolutely forbidden in the school.

The Lapp parents considered the school as an unnecessary evil. According to their opinion, the children learned next to nothing

there. On the other hand the children did not get the opportunity to learn the far more important and useful things which their parents could have learned them in the same time at home.

After the last world war, the central authorities started to show more interest for the education of Lapp speaking children. The Northern part of Norway (Finnmark) was completely burnt down by the German army when withdrawing in 1944 in front of the Red Army. Nothing was left behind, neither any school. At the same time when the rebuilding of schools started, the authorities made arrangements for improving and extending education of Lapp speaking children. It is typical for the bad experience the Lapps hitherto had with the Norwegian school that many of them were strongly opposing the extension of the period their children were to stay at school. They were convinced that it was a waste of time. Especially among those Lapps who are working with the traditional reindeer husbandry, the opposition was very strong and lasted until recent time. They knew the children did not learn anything which could be used in reindeer husbandry. They knew too that their children at school were under-achievers, much retarded compared with Norwegian speaking children, so that they anyhow would not have any chance to compete on other fields than that of reindeer-breeding. The school program was namely still presented in Norwegian only, and based on the needs and values of the Norwegian cultural and social urban society.

However, from the year 1963 a big change of mentality took place. At first with the authorities, later with the Lapp population. The most important feature of the attitude of the authorities was that they recognized that it was impossible that a harmonic development and an effective information could take place without being connected to Lapp language and culture. Of the same importance was that they were willing to take the practical consequence of this point of view. It was stated by law that the Lapp language could be introduced at the elementary school, both as a teaching language and as a subject. Also Lapp history and culture was given a place in the curriculum. Financial dispositions to realize all this were made. From 1969 there will also be established a "gymnasium" (within the Lapp speaking district) with an own stream for Lapp language, history and culture. The certificate from this "gymnasium" will give the same competence as those from other "gymnasia" in Norway do. Moreover, one is planning a special bilingual course at the teacher training seminar in Tromsø, which is to prepare teachers for their work in bilingual districts.

How do the Lapps react on this new school policy? The

important conversion of the authorities was not greeted only with joy. As the same authorities have been doing their best through a hundred years, to convince the Lapps that their language and culture was worthless, that their Lapp identity was an undesirable one, it was not quite so simple for the Lapps to understand that it now suddenly was alright to be a Lapp. Through many generations they had experienced that being a Lapp, speaking Lapp, was identical with defeat, poverty, despise. Is this new policy an honest one they ask? Do they not want us to underline our Lapp identity just to keep us at the bottom of the table? The Lapps know that the Lapp language does not pay in the national society.

Slowly, however, mistrust and misunderstanding seem to disappear. Among others the teachers have contributed to this by developing an intensive informative activity - e.g. about the advantages the use of the mother-tongue during the first school year is supposed to give for a more efficient teaching during the whole school period. In 1967 the first experiment with teaching reading, writing and arithmetic through the mother-tongue only, was started. The Norwegian language was used only half an hour every day, and only for elementary oral exercises. Only a very few of the parents dared to oppose the popular opinion, letting their children participate in the experiment. Already after one year the experiment showed to be successful. To-day many parents send their children to classes where the mother-tongue method is used. (In some districts there is a 11% support.) They did not only find out that their children performed better than children did before them, but they also found out that the children liked to be at school and were really interested and engaged in what was going on in the classroom.

It is not only the question of language, which is to bring a change in the minds of the people as to their relation to the school. Especially important is the economic situation in the local societies. The increase of the Lapp population is big. The average age is low. 30% is under 15 years. 75% is working within the s.c. primary occupations (agriculture, lumbering, fishing, reindeer-breeding). Their income is the lowest in Norway. While the population increases, the resources within the already mentioned primary occupations are maximum exploited. Leaving the local society seems to be the only way out. Till now rather few have left the local society, although shortage of working places exists. This should indicate that the social press outside the local society still is too strong for most of the Lapps. Therefore now people and authorities are looking at the school as the main mean to solve the economic problems. The school's program should primarily prepare the pupils for a living <u>outside</u> the local society and should procure an education as <u>general</u> as possible.

A quite opposite view is represented by the Lapps living of reindeer-breeding. Traditionally this group of Lapps has been quite independent from the press of the national society, because of their special way of living and working, which forced them to stand on their own feet. It was also this group, which for a long time did not expect any benefit from school education. Meanwhile they acknowledge that also reindeer-breeding to-day cannot give a family a reasonable living as long as it is done only in the traditional way. So far only a little research on reindeer-breeding is done in Norway, but no modern vocational training for reindeer-keepers has yet been established. So, also for the group of reindeer-breeders the school should bring a solution. Not by giving the children a mainly general education, but on the contrary, by giving them a vocational training as early as possible, and through this, primarily prepare them for a living inside the local society.

It is obvious that the general technical and economical development of modern society has made the Lapps more aware of the importance and the necessity of school education as they ever were (had to be) before. Still one can say that the attitude of the Lapps opposite the school is ambivalent. Some research on this subject is made by a Norwegian scholar, magister Anton Hoem:

> "The most general pre-condition for any education is that the school and the children belong to the same culture. In the nationwide society of Norway, home and school in general share common goals for the children's education. One will find that in the home and in the school much the same methods are used to educate the children, and motivation is sought in accordance with the same values and norms. Thus education at home and in school might be said to reinforce each other".

Hoem argues that the fact that one, in spite of the special arrangements the school authorities have made, still finds that Lapp pupils as a group are under-achievers, seriously retarded compared with the standards of the curriculum, is due to the fact that the school in Lappish districts belongs to the culture and social system of the nationwide society, while the home constitutes local Lapp communities with a varying, but generally low degree of connection to the nationwide society.

> "The investments in special training for teachers, printing of text-books and literature in Lappish, introduction of Lappish language and culture as subjects are efforts to raise the efficiency of teaching within the established system. They are not efforts to adapt the school to the particular needs and values of the Lappish society. Therefore one will find different norms and values in the school and the home, and different behavioral standards.

> In fact: the more efficient teaching, the greater discrepancy between goals of education at home and in the school. This makes the formal education an unnecessarily difficult process. The main results are a cultural and social gap between the most successful pupils and the local Lapp society, and a barrier between losers and the nationwide society". (Hoem)

For both parents and pupils school education will often mean making a choice between the local- and the national society. In most cases choosing the national society will mean cutting the ties with the local society. In the opposite case will indentification with the local society exclude from the national society.

The conclusion might be that although parents and pupils know they cannot manage without the school, and therefore show more interest in it than ever before, they at the same time feel that the school, as it is at the moment, gives them new problems, not economically but socio-psychologically.

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